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Exploration and Discovery.

An Early Christian Letter from Rome.—Among the *Amherst Papyri* recently published by Drs. Grenfell and Hunt is a fragment of an early Christian letter. It was written from Rome to Christians in the Fayûm, but by whom, or precisely to what intent, the lacunæ in it make obscure. The date, too, is only partially preserved — Παῦνι ἡ ἀπὸ Ῥώμης, the year having been broken away; but the editors placed it, on palæographical grounds, between 250 and 285 A. D. Of the three columns of the original letter, the second and most of the third remain. These unfortunately yield little continuous sense; the Fayûm Christians are clearly to make up certain sums of money and send them to Alexandria, where the writer, on his arrival from Rome, hopes to find them. Possibly there was a famine in the city. But hazy as the purport of the fragment is, a number of names are mentioned — Μάξιμος ὁ Πάπας, Πατὴρ Ἀπολλώνιος, Νῆλος, Πρειμετεῖνος, Θεονᾶς, an ἀναγνώστης or “reader” — and among these Professor Harnack, with his unerring historical sense, has made some illuminating identifications.

Beginning with the fact that in the East, in the earliest time, Πάπας (*Papa*) was the title of the Alexandrian bishop — so Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria († 264), styles his predecessor († 247) ὁ μακάριος πάπας Ἡρακλᾶς (Eusebius, *H. E.*, 7 : 7 : 40) — Harnack points out that there was an Alexandrian bishop named Maximus in the third century. Indeed, he was the successor of Dionysius, and ruled from 264 to 282 A. D., and there is thus every reason for identifying the Maximus of the Amherst letter with him. Any doubts as to this identification will be dissipated by the further fact that a Theonas is mentioned in this letter as in Alexandria, and that Maximus’ successor was called Theonas. Theonas was bishop of Alexandria from 282 to 300 A. D. As for Πατὴρ Ἀπολλώνιος, he was probably bishop of the local church in the Arsinoite nome to which the letter was addressed.

These identifications raise the letter to the significance of a first-rate historical document, and, as Professor Harnack points out, constitute a conspicuous vindication of the palæographical skill of the editors who placed the document between 250 and 285 A. D., for

the historical notices now found in it date it conclusively in the reign of Maximus, *i. e.*, between 264 and 282 A. D. The letter was thus written from Rome in the days of Dionysius of Rome (259–68) or Felix (269–74) or Eutychianus (275–83), but that one of these popes was its author is impossible, since the letter is dated by the Egyptian month Pauni, and the writer is clearly a resident of the Fayûm. There is extant a spurious letter of Felix to Maximus, and there was probably once a genuine one; and Christian intercourse between Rome and Alexandria at this time is further attested by the statement in Dionysius' letter to Germanus that there were brethren from Rome at Alexandria at the outbreak of the great persecution, and that one of these went with Dionysius, Maximus, and the deacons before the governor Æmilianus. The Amherst letter has served to bring us strangely near the early church at an interesting and critical period in its history, and it is the more unfortunate that this letter is so fragmentary.

New Fragments of Hebrews and Genesis.—A further interest attaches to this same papyrus, for on it have been written the opening words of the epistle to the Hebrews and the first five verses of Genesis in Greek. The fragment of Hebrews, which runs

πολυμερως και πολυ[τρο]πως
παλε ο θ(εο)ς λαλησ[α]ς το[ις π]ατρα
σιν] ημ[ω]ν εν τοις προ[φ]ητα[ις]

is interesting as being the only manuscript to contain the word ἡμῶν after πατέραςιν ("to our fathers"). The lines are written above the second column of the letter and are in a hand probably contemporary with it. The Genesis verses are given in the version of the Septuagint and in that of Aquila, in a hand perhaps half a century later. The first part of the fifth verse—"and God called the light day and the darkness he called night"—is missing from both texts, and from the Aquila text part of vs. 2 is missing. The text of Aquila will illustrate the slavish rigidity of his method, *e. g.*, in the use of σύν as an equivalent for ὅτι, even when ὅτι marks the direct object. As this is the only manuscript to preserve certain parts of Aquila's fourth and fifth verses, the Amherst lines are here given.

εν κεφαλω εκτισεν θ(εο)ς συν τον ουρανον
και τ[η]ν γην η δε γη ην κενωμα και [ο]ν
θεν και [ε]ιπεν θ(εο)ς [γ]εν[η]θητω φω[ς] και

εγεν[ετ]ο φως [και ειδε]ν θ(εο)ς το φω[ς ο]τι αγα
 θον . . διεχ[ωρισεν] θ(εο)ς μετοξυ φω[τος
 και μετοξυ του [σκοτο]υς και εγενετο εσ[π]ερα
 και [. . . π]ρωι η[μ]ερα πρωτη⁻¹

The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles.—Coptic fragments of a non-canonical gospel were recently published from a Strassburg papyrus by Jacoby, and were identified by him as parts of the lost Gospel according to the Egyptians. His reviewers incline, however, to the opinion that the fragments have nothing to do with the Gospel according to the Egyptians, but may, perhaps, be from the Ebionite Gospel of the Twelve Apostles mentioned by Origen in his first homily on Saint Luke.²

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¹ GRENFELL AND HUNT, *The Amherst Papyri*, London, 1900, pp. 28-31; ADOLF HARNACK, "Zu den Amherst Papyri," *Sitzungsberichte der Kön. Preus. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, Vols. XLII, XLIII, November 1, 1900, pp. 984-95.

² ZAHN, *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, Vol. XI (1900), pp. 361-70; SCHMIDT, *Gött. gel. Anz.*, Vol. CLXII (1900), pp. 481-506.